

THE BENEFITS & DIFFICULTIES OF ADOPTING SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES AMONG THE MN TOURISM INDUSTRY



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Introduction

What is Sustainable Tourism?

Meeting the needs of present tourists while protecting & enhancing future tourism opportunities (WTO).

What did this study do?

Document changes in perceived benefits & difficulties to implement sustainability practices by a breadth of tourism entities in Minnesota.

Why did we conduct this study?

Create baseline information & compare attitudes & practices across time.

Methods

Questionnaire: Online to tourism entities in a U.S. state (MN).

Content: Perceived benefits & difficulties to implement sustainable practices.

Sample size & Completion rate:

- 2007: n=451, rate=19%
- 2010: n=581, rate=17%
- 2013: n=426, rate=12%

Analysis: Descriptive statistics & Analysis of Variance in SPSS

Perceived Benefits in 2013

> 80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with 5 of 8 benefits

- Improved organizational image
- Attracting new clientele
- Improved customer perception
- Remaining competitive
- Improved customer prospects

Perceived Difficulties in 2013

> 75% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with 2 of 10 difficulties

- Initial financial cost
- Time & energy

Perceived Benefits 2007-2013

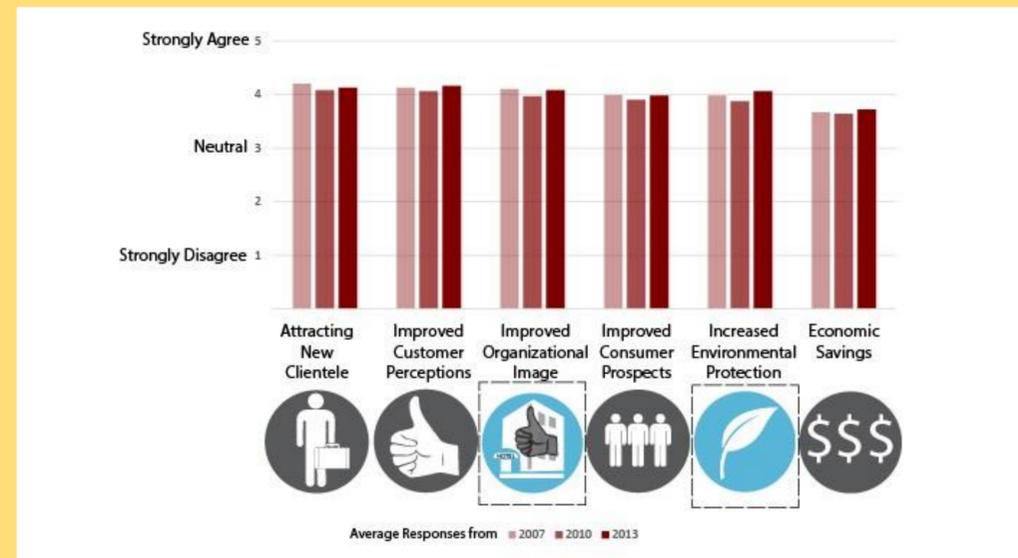


Figure 1. Agreement with potential benefits of sustainable business practices (n=426-581).

Agreement with 2 benefits changed significantly over time (Figure 1 above).

Improved organizational image: 2007 > 2010 ($F = 3.57, p < 0.05$)

Increased environmental protection: 2013 > 2010 ($F = 5.13, p < 0.05$)

Perceived Difficulties 2007-2013

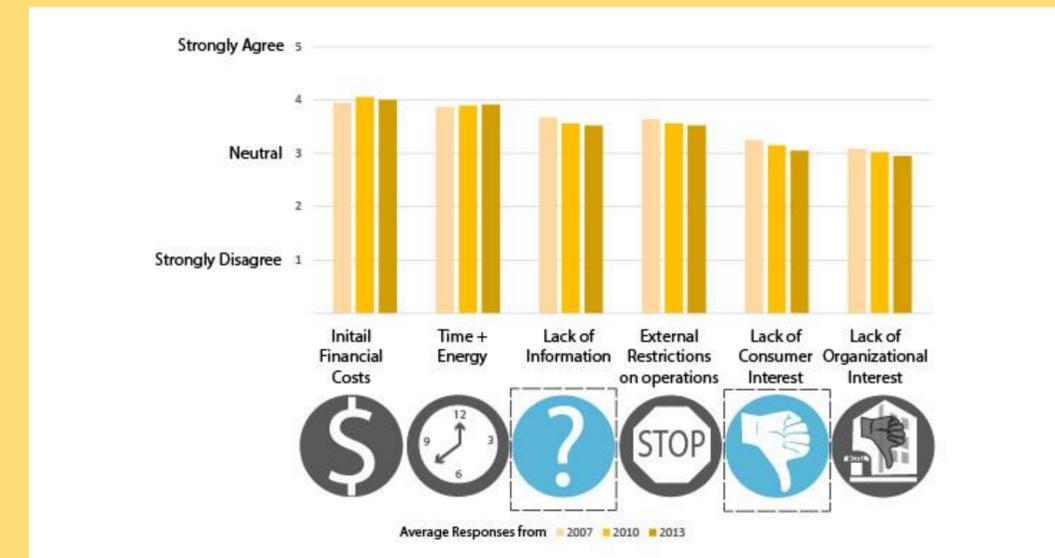


Figure 2. Agreement with potential difficulties of sustainable business practices (n=426-581).

Agreement with 2 difficulties decreased significantly from 2007 to 2013 (Figure 2 above).

Lack of information: 2013 < 2007; $F = 3.34, p < 0.05$

Lack of interest within consumer base: 2013 < 2007 ($F = 4.34, p < 0.05$).

Discussion & Future Research

Discussion: A set of perceived benefits & challenges to sustainable tourism remains constant. The increased perception of sustainable practices as beneficial to the environment may cultivate an intrinsic motivation which is conducive to the actual implementation of sustainable practices. Decreased agreement with improved organizational image may reflect society's increasing expectation of sustainable practices as an integral part of business. Decreased agreement with lack of information indicates at least some information has been diffused. The realized interest within the consumer base reveals recognition of consumers' interest. **Future research:** Assess attitudes toward specific practices, continue tracking, compare sector perceptions, and compare findings with other states or countries.